

SECRET 25X1 OCI No. 2731/73
6 December 1973

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Implications of the Arab Summit.

The leaders of all Arab states, with the exception of Libya and Iraq, met in Algiers on 26 November for a three-day conference to discuss the military and political aspects of the current Arab-Israeli situation. Decisions made in Algiers were essentially a confirmation of positions adopted elsewhere--in the privacy of the bilateral contacts that most Arab heads of state prefer as a medium for their diplomacy. The decisions will influence future Arab policies only to the extent that they accord with the views of the individual leaders.

The summit as such will thus have little impact on the forthcoming peace conference. By gathering the Arab leaders together in the same conference hall, it nevertheless served to expose more clearly--for the benefit of those who may have had doubts--just which states control the course of events and how far those states are prepared to go to accommodate issues that do not directly touch on their interests.

On issues of war and peace, President Sadat set the tone; on matters of oil and monetary resources, King Faysal dominated. In each case, policy had been determined before the summit convened, the other leaders knew it, and efforts to steer a difference course, if made at all, were easily turned aside.

Sadat went to the summit having decided to press forward with diplomatic efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute. No apparent attempt was made to dissuade him, despite continuing doubts among, for instance, the Algerians. No one seriously challenged the limited objectives Sadat and President Asad have set for negotiations; the carefully controlled Cairo and Algiers press dispatches on summit proceedings, and virtually all speeches during the conference, meticulously referred throughout to the restoration of "occupied" Arab lands, thus consciously setting limits to Arab territorial ambitions. Apparently even an earlier

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resolution passed by the foreign ministers' conference affirming the Arab character of Jerusalem was watered down, reportedly over Faysal's objections, to call only for the city's liberation from Israeli control.

Sadat's success in maintaining control over negotiating policy was matched by Faysal's success in oil matters. Although there is some indication that producers not willing to sustain the financial losses of a cutback greater than 25 percent will not be forced to institute the progressive five-percent monthly cuts, Faysal himself emerged from the summit still publicly committed to maintain his decreed oil policy for the duration of the Israeli occupation. Efforts by President Bourguiba and others--including, by one account, Egypt--to induce a slight relaxation apparently proved fruitless. If there is to be a relaxation, it will be decided by Faysal; the summit's action to ease the restrictions on Japan had already been agreed upon unilaterally by the Saudis.

The summit meeting, by not seriously challenging the established policies of either Sadat or Faysal, thus endorsed the leadership role each had already assumed. On the question of negotiations, Sadat received an implicit mandate to attend the peace conference and to negotiate or not as he sees fit. He would have done the same had the summit not met at all, and it is doubtful that even the presence of Libya and Iraq would have altered his determination.

If the summit had little effect on Sadat's negotiating policy in general, the gathering did point up one area in which Sadat will be the follower rather than the leader in setting Arab policy. With regard to the Jordanian-fedayeen representational issue, Sadat's actions indicate that he is prepared for the most part to follow the trend of outside opinion. He probably has little real interest in who ultimately controls the West Bank after it has been removed from Israeli control, and he will gauge his support for the fedayeen or for Jordan according to its effect on Egypt's own interests. Where those interests cease to be involved, neither party can expect firm backing.

The summit's designation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole representative of the Palestinians was a matter of pragmatism for Sadat, if not for the other Arab leaders. Bringing the fedayeen along on the

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negotiating track and thereby undercutting their ability to sabotage a peace settlement is critical to Sadat, and it was undoubtedly this concern that motivated his vote for the PLO at Jordan's expense. Beyond this, Sadat has long made it clear that he will not allow the Palestinian question to interfere with the Egyptian aspects of a settlement and that, once negotiations begin, the fedayeen must largely fend for themselves against Israel, Jordan, and the US.

The same pragmatism applies, in Sadat's view, to King Husayn. Sadat does not intend to abandon the King; nor apparently does he believe that Husayn should or will carry through on his threat to boycott the peace conference. He will work on Husayn, as he worked on the fedayeen, to follow along on a unified Arab negotiating track. As with the fedayeen, however, Sadat's support for Husayn extends only so far as Jordan's interests touch on his own. When negotiations are under way, he will balance the weight of Arab support for the Palestinians, and Arab willingness to abandon Jordan, against the weight of Israeli opposition to the fedayeen and the US position on the Palestinians. His own position will be governed by his perceptions of which way the scale is tipping and how this affects his ability to regain Egyptian territory.

The summit may have crystallized Sadat's thinking on the Palestinian issue as it affects negotiations, but it did not significantly alter his previous views and it will not alter his willingness or ability to negotiate. Nor, for that matter, did the meeting change the policies of the other Arab leaders on this or any other question involved in the negotiations. The Jordanian-PLO conflict was the most significant issue in long-range terms that arose at the summit; it would have arisen without the summit, however, and the issue will be resolved without reference to the summit's decisions.

The conference thus will have an impact on negotiations and on the Israeli position at the talks only to the extent that it has highlighted likely obstacles to progress. They are not obstacles that the summit created.

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